Flashback

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Lessie Stringfellow Read

suffragist, newspaper editor, publisher, historian, organizer, spiritualist, WCHS founding member, and overall forceful presence

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Preserving our past for future generations

Volume 70 Fall 2020 Number 3

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Lessie Stringfellow Read was a leader in securing the vote for women in Arkansas in the early decades of the 20th century. Active in the cultural, political, and literary life of Fayetteville, she was a founding member of the Washington County Historical Society. An annual writing award, the Lessie Stringfellow Read Prize, is given in her honor by the WCHS.

"Miss Lessie" Was There: Fayetteville's Renowned Organizer and Newspaperwoman, Lessie Stringfellow Read

By Joshua Cobbs Youngblood

Lessie Stringfellow Read (left) and Mrs. John Feathers, a close friend and mother of Tom Feathers, WCHS president and Read's business associate, ca. 1950. Courtesy Shiloh Museum of Ozark History, Washington County Historical Society Collection (P-1976).

When the 19th amendment granted women the right to vote 100 years ago, some of the success for Arkansas having joined the nationwide movement for change as the 12th state to ratify belonged to Mrs. Lessie Stringfellow Read of Fayetteville. For much of the 20th century, many Fayetteville civic activities seemingly revolved around or flowed through the remarkable suffragist, journalist, newspaper editor, publisher, organizer, and correspondent of the famous and influential.

Although Read has often been remembered as an avowed Spiritualist, who believed that the living could communicate with the dead, between when she first arrived in 1911 and her death in 1971, "Miss Lessie," as she was often called, created a lasting impact as a leading progres-

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sive voice in her adopted community. A close friend and collaborator of businesswoman and newspaper publisher, Roberta Fulbright, Read was a guiding force at the dawn of women's clubs in Fayetteville. She was the first secretary and founding member of the 20th Century Club in 1912, and at age 24 she was a founding member of the Washington County Women's Suffrage Association. Read was elected president of the Fayetteville Equal Suffrage Association before achieving national office. She served as press secretary from 1916 to 1926 for the General Federation of Women's Clubs, the largest women's organization in the world.[1] She was the primary organizer for the General Federation's 1918 convention in Hot Springs, Arkansas, even as she became the first woman editor of the *Fayetteville Democrat*. Read was also an integral part of Fayetteville's literary salon culture of the early 20th century, including being a founding member of the Fayetteville chapter of the American Association of University Women. Always engaged, Read was appointed by Governor Carl Bailey as one of Fayetteville's representatives to the Arkansas Centennial Commission and served as an officer for the Red Cross during World War I.

In noting Read's prominence, local historian William Simeon Campbell pointed to the scores of stories and articles and newsletters distributed through her official spokesperson role that carried the dateline: "Fayetteville, Arkansas." She was known and comfortable as a professional all over the country. As a chairperson, she "directed the press and publicity work in each state, co-operated with state chairmen and 46 state bulletin directors, and directed press work of seven national conventions," and interviewed numerous politicians and activists, writers, philanthropists, and industrialists.[2]

Despite her numerous articles in newspapers and magazines across the United States, Read left no significant autobiographical accounts or memoirs. In 1951, Read became a founding member of the Washington County Historical Society (WCHS), and served as chairperson of the first meeting, with Walter Lemke serving as secretary before he assumed the role of president.[3] However, she has also never had an in-depth examination of her life and work published by the society.

The Special Collections of the University of Arkansas Libraries includes two archives offering glimpses of Read's remarkable life. A portion of the WCHS archive documents her parents as well as providing a small selection of surviving Read manuscripts. A speech from around 1928 drafted for the Fortnightly women's club, jokingly titled "Adventures of an Amateur Journalist," offers highlights from midway through her career. Along with a few autobiographical poems, these constitute the most revealing information from Read herself. Another collection, the Lessie Stringfellow Read Papers, includes materials she collected in her roles as press officer and editor, and her involvement in the Arkansas Federation of Women's Clubs, the Women's News Service, Inc., the Authors and Composers Society of Arkansas, the League of American Pen Women,

Lessie Stringfellow Read at two and a half years of age, 1894. Courtesy Shiloh Museum of Ozark History, Washington County Historical Society Collection (P-2570).

the National American Woman Suffrage Association, and International Association of Altrusa Clubs.[4]

During her own lifetime, Read gained inclusion in several local histories and received brief biographical treatments. She was only 35 when Campbell featured her as a historically important citizen of Fayetteville in his centennial celebration of the city, *One Hundred Years of Fayetteville, 1828-1928*.[5] Longtime business manager of the *Arkansas Gazette* and Little Rock author and historian Fred Allsopp included Read in his 1933 compilation, *The Poets and Poetry of Arkansas*. Lex Davis and Harry Forest Barnes included Read in *Among Arkansas Leaders* the next year in 1934.[6]

Stephen Chism, long time librarian at the University of Arkansas, provided the most thorough studies of Read, albeit firmly grounded in her family's Spiritualism. His 2000 *Arkansas Historical Quarterly* article, "The Very Happiest Tiding" closely examined the correspondence between Read, her mother Alice, and world-famous author, Arthur Conan Doyle. Chism illustrated the influence between Alice and Doyle on their mutual publications about communing with departed sons. In a remarkable turn of fortune, Chism encountered some of the last remaining artifactual evidence of Read's spiritualism in an estate sale at the family's mansion in Fayetteville when he was just 19. Over the years he gathered photographs of the Stringfellow family, along with letters and other documents. The chance encounter and collecting eventually turned Chism's interest into the only book length treatment of the Stringfellows and Reads of Fayetteville, *The Afterlife of Leslie Stringfellow: A Nineteenth-Century Southern Family's Experiences with Spiritualism*, in 2005.[7] His shorter entries in the *Encyclopedia of Arkansas History and Culture* and Nancy Williams' *Arkansas Biography: A Collection of Notables* have made Read's remarkable life accessible to later generations of readers and students of Arkansas history.[8] More recently, an entry on Read by Leah Lambert was included in the Arkansas Women's Suffrage Centennial project, a virtual exhibit hosted by the Center for Arkansas History and Culture.[9]

Born Mable Staples in 1891 in Temple, Texas, the future Mrs. Read was adopted by the accomplished horticulturist Henry Martyn Stringfellow and his wife as a toddler. Mable was the youngest of three children

of her birth parents, who when both deathly ill, arranged for the two older children to return home to their grandparents in Kentucky. They thought a third charge would be too much for the older relations, and so arranged for Mable to live with their close friends, the Stringfellows who were still mourning the death of their only son, Leslie.

Leslie Stringfellow, the son of Read's adoptive parents, who they later communicated with through Spiritualist practices, just before his death in 1886. Courtesy Shiloh Museum of Ozark History, Washington County Historical Society Collection (P-2576).

Henry Stringfellow had been a Confederate officer during the Civil War before becoming wealthy as a horticulturist and promoter of the fruit industry in Texas. Stringfellow was a son of the lawyer and prominent Virginia clergyman Horace Stringfellow, onetime Rector of the Trinity Episcopal Church in Washington, D.C. The younger Stringfellow earned multiple degrees in a variety of fields, including law and religion, by age 22 before the outbreak of the Civil War. Alice Johnston was the socialite daughter of a doctor and merchant turned slave-owning Texas cotton planter who attended boarding schools in New York and North Carolina and was an accomplished musician. Henry and Alice met after Stringfellow moved with Confederate troops first to Galveston, then Houston in 1862. A 1941 *Arkansas Gazette Magazine* article profiled Alice as the embodiment of the "southern belle" of years past as she celebrated her 96th birthday.[10]

Henry and Alice's father struggled to regain their financial standing after the war. Ever the brilliant student, Stringfellow developed an interest in horticulture and fruit cultivation. He is credited with introducing citrus agriculture to Texas, and his pear farm became celebrated around the world. Later he became interested in walnuts and other food nuts and researched how to graft English varieties with native southern ones, a pursuit he continued after moving to the Ozarks.

Henry and Alice Stringfellow first sought out Spiritualism in order to communicate with their son, Leslie, who died of malaria in 1886. Alice became a practitioner of "automatic writing," used to record transmissions from ethereal contacts, and together Henry and Alice found they could, only with both of their hands on the Ouija board using the planchette, commune with Leslie. A fragment of the automatic writing survives in the Special Collections at the University of Arkansas Libraries. Over

more than a decade, the Stringfellows received hundreds of "letters" from Leslie.

Young Mable renamed herself "Lessie," with her adoptive parents' support, after communication from their deceased son. Leslie supposedly enjoyed talking with the sister he never met while alive and indicated that he liked the way she lisped and mispronounced his name, although his communications slowed after Lessie joined the family. Lessie Stringfellow was raised by her educated and successful parents to be an accomplished and well-connected young woman from the social elite of the "New South." After becoming a professional writer, Read sometimes used Mable Staples as a *nom de plume* for short stories and essays.[11]

Lessie Stringfellow Read in a portrait by Grabill, ca. 1930. Courtesy Shiloh Museum of Ozark History, Washington County Historical Society Collection (P-1977).

Lessie grew up in San Antonio, Galveston, and Lampasas, Texas, as her father moved the family around the state, and they traveled frequently. Young Miss Stringfellow was a celebrated debutante and won the crown of Lampasas Fire Queen in 1908.[12] The wedding of the "popular young lady" to pharmacist James Read at the Stringfellows' home was reported as an important social event for the small town of Lampasas in detail in the *Langham's Weekly*, down to the types of flowers and gifts for the attendants. A clipping brought to Arkansas with the bride was later incorporated into Read's papers in the WCHS archives.[13] Henry and Alice moved to Fayetteville with Lessie and her new husband in 1911 after Mr. Stringfellow suffered declining health. He died a year later, after completing the construction of the family's new home, a recreation of their Lampasas mansion, at 329 North Washington Avenue. The beautiful home, which witnessed club meetings and seances for decades until the 1960s, survives as part of the Washington-Willow Historic District.[14]

While still in Texas, Read was tutored by an academic affiliated with Stanford University before later attending classes at the University of Arkansas. She began her journalism career as a teenager while still in Texas where she was a correspondent for her hometown newspaper and published articles in the *Houston Chronicle* and the *San Antonio Express*.[15] She

began writing for the *Fayetteville Democrat* soon after she arrived in town. James Read left his wife and Fayetteville suddenly and permanently, possibly related to fraud at the drugstore on Dickson Street where he worked. As Chism has suggested, the dissolution of her marriage may have allowed young Mrs. Read, with both the social status of a married woman and freedom from the expected duties of marriage and motherhood, to dedicate herself to her activist and professional interests while sharing a home and caring for her mother.[16]

Concerned about not having studied journalism formally, Read immersed herself in self-study on the craft of newspaper reporting, while holding on to the dream of eventually making her career writing poetry or fiction. Read recalled, "It was by accident and not design that I became a newspaper person although I think I was born with ink in my blood and pencil in my hand."[17] Once in Fayetteville, the young journalist also began her quick rise in prominence in suffrage and women's organizations. Before World War I she focused on society reporting and fostered more interest in local activities and individuals; she maintained an interest in society reporting throughout her career. After becoming managing editor, she contributed the column "Round About Town" for years.[18]

Read remained the General Federation's press secretary during a decade of tremendous change, publishing frequently and coordinating national communication through World War I, the passage of the 19th Amendment, and other pivotal moments until 1926. Historians Giselle Roberts and Melissa Walker investigated the growth of women's clubs, many situated under the umbrella of the General Federation, as an important aspect of the Progressive Era of the late 19th and early 20th centuries and the desire of many middle- and upper-class women with newfound economic stability and freedom from domestic labor for greater civic involvement. "Clubs that had offered nineteenth-century women a means of self-study and intellectual improvement now turned their attention to benevolence and reform work,"[19] which the General Federation helped focus energy on. In the southern states, the clubs that joined the federation and the women who led them, were also products of the "New South" impulse to create a new regional identity focused on reform while respecting traditional values.

Read's interest in club work, political causes, and social reform intersected frequently with her professional work as a journalist. As press secretary, Read communicated with such prominent individuals as Thomas Edison and John D. Rockefeller, whose estates she toured. She interviewed numerous famous people who visited Fayetteville and even more through travels to New York, Washington, D.C., and beyond. Through her Federation and war relief work, Read met Woodrow Wilson, became friends with his wife, and was an invited guest at the White House. She interviewed Herbert Hoover and met William Harold Taft numerous times including when he visited Fayetteville as a Supreme Court Justice after he

Lessie Stringfellow Read in a portrait, ca. 1925. Courtesy Shiloh Museum of Ozark History, Washington County Historical Society Collection (P-2568).

was President. She hosted Carrie Chapman Catt, President of the American Woman's Suffrage Association, at her home in Fayetteville after helping arrange Catt's visit to deliver a suffrage address in town. Already a well-known suffragist by the US entrance into World War I, and like other women in Arkansas devoted to political equality, Read served in the Red Cross and volunteered in other ways to support the war effort.[22] She served as executive secretary of the Home Services Department responsible for registering and facilitating the relief for every soldier from Washington County.[21] Read used her national connections to raise funds for soldiers at home and abroad, and she received commendations and appreciations from around the world for her efforts.

Read became the acting editor of the *Democrat* after J.D. Hurst left to join the war effort. When Hurst returned, Read offered to step down, but Hurst wanted her to continue. She soon assumed the Editor-in-Chief title permanently and remained in that position for more than 20 years. Fayetteville's newspapers have a strong history of women leaders. The *Fayetteville Daily* was established by Miss Louis Payne after decades of more intermittent newspapers serving the city. Following the death of Jay Fulbright, father to later Senator J. William Fulbright, Roberta Fulbright consolidated business interests and emerged as both a successful business leader and influential newspaper publisher of the combined Fayetteville papers. Mrs. Fulbright took over majority control of the paper in 1926, and she and Read developed a powerful relationship that included the work of the *Democrat* Publishing Company.[22]

Read believed that progressive minded clubwomen needed to influence politics and help shape better government. She served as district

chairperson of the Democrat Women's Club in Arkansas. A *Los Angeles Times* article from 1924 recalled how well received Read was by the club women of Los Angeles during a recent convention while sharing that Read implored women: "to get out the vote."[23] As an active Democrat she was affiliated with both the Progressive Era and the later "New Deal" platforms. Political power at the local and regional level was entwined with institutionalized racism and Jim Crow political culture in which the Democratic Party dominated across much of the South. While there is little available evidence of Read being openly racist, there is similarly little in her reporting and club activity to suggest that she supported voting and other civil rights for African Americans, even as she tirelessly worked for suffrage for white women.

Even though Read's belief in expanded civil rights may not have extended to everyone, she continued to advocate for greater influence of women in American politics. Read's leadership and organizational work with women's clubs across the country reflected her belief that women's work, including in the domestic sphere as homemakers–their role as maternalists, or mothers, within the larger paternalistic world–was intertwined with the duties of American citizenship. "America's relation to other nations is merely the relation of the average American toward other races, and the average American's point of view on international relations is determined by that which he is taught at home."[24] The work of women club members was vitally important amidst America's emerging role as an international power even as it navigated its own changing notions of citizenship at home. As the historian of the General Federation, Paige Meltzer, described the political and social activism during the Progressive Era, "female activists used traditional constructions of womanhood, which imagined all women as mothers and homemakers, to justify their entrance into community affairs: as 'municipal housekeepers,' they would clean up politics, cities, and see after the health and wellbeing of their neighbors."[25]

In a nationally syndicated article from June 22, 1924, "Club Women–Here, There and Everywhere," Read extolled the role of women in supporting artists and new exhibitions, along with an update on the new president of the Federation. Read highlighted the importance of the emerging role of the millions of members of "organized womanhood."[26] As a newspaper woman and organizer in the Ozarks, Read connected Arkansas through her service with civic and social organizations in every corner of the growing American empire. Telling the story of having turned down a job offer at a major magazine, Read said, "anybody who wants to can write as successfully in the Ozarks Mountains as she can in a Manhattan flat."[27]

By the end of Read's first decade as editor, the *Fayetteville Democrat* had expanded to include ten staff members. Several women worked there as part-time and full-time reporters, including Mabel Clair Gold, Peggie Sue

Lighton, Annie King, and Doris Drake.[28] However, the *Democrat* would face significant challenges and contraction during the Great Depression, and Fulbright and her ally Read found themselves in opposition to local political interests.

Read and Fulbright founded the Good Government League in Fayetteville in 1933. That coalition of churches, civic groups, and the women of the F*ayetteville Democrat* formed to take on entrenched corruption in the city serving Sheriff Harley Grover and County Circuit Court Judge John S. Combs. Along with another woman reporter, Maude Gold, Read and Fulbright resisted threats of violence and frequent intimidation to use the paper to expose corruption when legal avenues were closed off.

The paper changed its name to the *Northwest Arkansas Times* in the 1930s. Read continued reporting for the hometown paper until she retired in 1945. Over the years she worked as a correspondent for the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch* and the *Memphis Commercial Appeal*. She sometimes contributed to the Associated Press, and she wrote throughout her career for magazines including *Good Housekeeping*, *Delineator*, *Southern Women's Magazine*, *Country Gentleman*, *Woman Citizen*, and *The Saturday Evening Post*. In the last years of her career Read profiled local people with interesting expertise in her "What's Your Hobby?" column. Reflecting on her fascination with personalities, Read said, "in the newspaper game I learned that people are the most important subject in the world, just as you are the most interesting person in the world–to yourself."[29]

Alongside her civic involvement and professional work, Read participated in the vibrant literary scene that developed in Fayetteville in the 1920s. The local salon culture was closely associated with award-winning magazine, adventure, and adolescent fiction writer Charles Finger, Italian-born poet Rosa Marinoni, the famed Lighton Family of Happy Hollow Farm, emerging figures such as locally-born Charles Morrow Wilson, and other locally influential women writers such as Zillah Peel Cross. The *Arkansas Gazette* noted the cultural development in a November 20, 1921, article, "Mecca for Writers," which described the city's increasingly obvious role as the "Athens of Arkansas." Mrs. K.G. Falkvist reported the development. "Gayetta [sic] Lodge in Fayetteville, the home of Charles J. Finger, has become the mecca for literary lights who visit our state. As a writer Mr. Finger is better known in Paris and London and New York than he is in Arkansas....University folk often motor out to "Gayetta [sic] Lodge to share in the inspiration....That Lessie Stringfellow Read is there, of course, goes without saying. The party would not be complete without her."

Always attuned to the social moments and possibility of good copy, Read interviewed many of the writers who visited Fayetteville. Among the notable signatures in the Gayeta guest book are Carl Sandburg and Edgar Lee Masters, and Read interviewed them both. She remained friends and corresponded frequently with Sandburg for years afterward. Of the

many celebrities she interviewed, Read suggested that Progressive Era investigative journalist and biographer Ida Tarbell was the most interesting. Read considered Tarbell the "greatest woman writer in the world," and Tarbell hosted Read at a New York writers' club, "where our cigar-smoking Amy Lowell and others of note were present."

Some literary groups Read helped establish in Fayetteville in the 1920s are still active such as the Modern Literature Club, founded in 1926 as a book study group within the Fayetteville chapter of the American Association of University Women. Members of the AAUW gathered twice a month to review and critique readings in contemporary literature. Read helped the community's literary output find publication in the paper and under the banner of the Democrat Publishing Company.

Lessie Stringfellow Read, later in life, ca. 1960. Courtesy Shiloh Museum of Ozark History, Washington County Historical Society Collection (P-1974).

Read was instrumental in bringing to print the 1928 book *Ozark "Ballards"* by George Ballard, an African-American poet from Fayetteville. A barber and auto mechanic by profession, Ballard was well known locally as a poet and singer, and his poems dedicated to American presidents Woodrow Wilson and Calvin Coolidge attracted national attention. Although certainly not a member of Read's literary societies or clubs–Fayetteville was still strictly segregated despite the progressive and literary ideals of some of its citizens–Read encouraged Ballard's writing, published his poems in the paper, and edited his book length collection.[30] Read's introduction to the book lauds Ballard as an artist of innate talent, although it was condescending and infantilizing of the untrained writer as well. Ballard opened the collection, however, with an affectionate verse dedicated to Read: "Others will yet sing her fame, she has helped me to succeed." Ballard's book followed Read and Fulbright's publication of Read's mother Alice's book in 1926, *Leslie's Letters to His Mother*. Read later edited Fulbright's 1949 poetry collection *Sea (See) Foam: Travel Notes*.[31]

Of all the social and literary connections of Read and her family and friends in Fayetteville, the correspondence with Arthur Conan Doyle stands out. Doyle had further embraced Spiritualism and mystical religions after the deaths of his son and brother in World War I. In 1919 he responded to letters from Read and her mother about their own desires

to contact departed family and reviewed Alice's book manuscript. A year after Read published the 100 copies of *Leslie's Letters*, Doyle published *Pheneas Speaks: Direct Spirit Communication in the Family Circle* in 1927. Alice lived with her daughter in their Fayetteville home until she passed away in 1946. Read and her father had both been members of the Rosicrucian Society of Spiritualists, and she continued to hold meetings in the mansion on Washington until the 1960s.[32]

Tom Feathers, a longtime leader of the WCHS, and veteran of the *Northwest Arkansas Times*, served as Read's business manager toward the end of her life. A telling anecdote from her later years was Feathers' sale, on Read's behalf, of the old McCormick log house located on Garland just north of campus. An important artifact of Fayetteville of the 19th century, Read was holding onto to the bit of Fayetteville's disappearing past even as she and others had worked to build the social structures of the growing community.[33] Feathers' extensive collection of archival documents and books became the cornerstone of the WCHS library after his death, only a few years after Read's, and includes much of the remaining evidence of Miss Lessie's unique contributions. The Feathers received the Stringfellow mansion after she died.

Miss Lessie's energy and concern for her community continued to influence Fayetteville even as her once once-sharp intellect deteriorated rapidly in her later years. The formerly prominent citizen spent the last years of her life in convalescence in the City Hospital, where she died May 28, 1971, with no immediate surviving family.[34] One of the first activities of the WCHS planned during the inaugural meeting that Read chaired was a tour of Evergreen Cemetery, where she herself was laid to rest.

Endnotes

[1]Stephan Chism, "Lessie Stringfellow Read," in Nancy Williams and Jeannie M. Whayne, *Arkansas Biography: A Collection of Notable Lives* (Fayetteville, AR: University of Arkansas Press, 2000), p. 234; "40th Observed By 20th Century Club," *Northwest Arkansas Times*, October 6, 1952.

[2]William S. Campbell and Marian Tebbetts Banes, *One Hundred Years of Fayetteville, 1828-1928* (Fayetteville, AR: Washington County Historical Society, 1977), p. 110.

[3]"Society Holds Its First Meeting," *Flashback* 1, no. 1 (March 1951), p. 1.

[4]See the Washington County Historical Society Papers (MC1368) and the Lessie Stringfellow Read Collection (MS R22), Special Collections, University of Arkansas Libraries.

[5]Campbell, *One Hundred Years of Fayetteville, 1828-1928*. First published in 1928, the perennially popular book among Fayetteville natives and new residents was republished by the WCHS in 1977.

[6]Frederick William Allsopp, *The Poets and Poetry of Arkansas* (Little Rock, AR: Central Print. Co., 1933); Lex Bruce Davis and Harry Forest Barnes, *Among Arkansas Leaders* (Little Rock, AR: 1934).

[7]Stephen J. Chism, *The Afterlife of Leslie Stringfellow: A Nineteenth-Century Southern Family's Experiences with Spiritualism* (Fayetteville, AR: Fullcourte Press, 2005).

[8]Chism, *Arkansas Biography: A Collection of Notable Lives*; Stephen Chism, "Lessie Stringfellow Read (1891-1971)," *Encyclopedia of Arkansas History and Culture*, https://encyclopediaofarkansas.net/entries/lessie-stringfellow-read-1745/.

[9]Leah Lambert, "Lessie Stringfellow Read (1891-1871)," Arkansas Women's Suffrage Centennial

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[10]Irene Carlisle, "A Southern Belle Remembers the South," *Arkansas Gazette Magazine*, October 19, 1941, pp. 1, 12.
[11]See manuscripts such as "Petals from her Rose Jar of Dreams as Uncovered and Stirred by the Hand of Memory" in the WCHS archives, box 39.
[12]Williams and Whayne, *Arkansas Biography*, p. 233.
[13]Chism, Stephen J., *The Afterlife of Leslie Stringfellow*, p. 29.
[14]Helen Finger Leflar and Carolyn Lewis Newbern, *Yesterdays: A Walk Through the Washington-Willow Historic District, Fayetteville, Arkansas* (Fayetteville, AR: Washington County Historical Society, 1983).
[15]Ibid.
[16]Chism, *Afterlife of Leslie Stringfellow*, p. 30.
[17]Read, "Adventures of an Amateur Journalist," manuscript in the Washington County Historical Society Papers, box 39, p. 2.
[18]Thomas Rothrock, "First Press Destroyed; Editor Joins Confederates," *Northwest Arkansas Times*, September 25, 1967.
[19]Giselle Roberts and Melissa Walker, "Introduction," In *Southern Women in the Progressive Era: A Reader*, edited by Roberts Giselle and Walker Melissa (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 2019), p. 2.
[20]See the Florence Brown Cotnam Papers, Special Collections, University of Arkansas Libraries.
[21]Campbell, *One Hundred Years of Fayetteville, 1828-1928*, pp. 51-52.
[22]Ibid., p. 14.
[23]M. Nye, "Of interest to women: WOMEN STRESS DUTY OF VOTING," *Los Angeles Times*, October 30, 1924, p. A7.
[24]Lessie Stringfellow Read, "Unity Found in Diversity," *Los Angeles Times*, April 11, 1926, p. C9.
[25]Paige Meltzer, ""The Pulse and Conscience of America': The General Federation and Women's Citizenship, 1945-1960," *Frontiers: A Journal of Women Studies* 30, no. 3 (2009): 52-76, p. 52.
[26]Lessie Stringfellow Read, "Club Women–Here, There and Everywhere," *Los Angeles Times*, June 22, 1924, p. B38.
[27]Read, "Adventures of Amateur Journalist," p. 2.
[28]Campbell, *One Hundred Years of Fayetteville, 1828-1928*, p. 14.
[29]Read, "Adventures of Amateur Journalist," p. 4.
[30]J.B. Hogan, "George Ballard: Poet of the Holler," *Flashback* 63, no. 4 (Winter 2013): pp. 147-159; George Ballard and Lessie Stringfellow Read, *Ozark "Ballards"* (Fayetteville, AR: Democrat Publishing and Printing Company, 1928).
[31]Roberta Waugh Fulbright and Lessie Stringfellow Read, *Sea (See) Foam: Travel Notes* (Siloam Springs, AR: John Brown University Press), 1949.
[32]Stephen J. Chism and Arthur Conan Doyle, ""The Very Happiest Tiding": Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's Correspondence with Arkansas Spiritualists," *The Arkansas Historical Quarterly* 59, no. 3 (2000): pp. 299-310.
[33]"Historic Fayetteville Home to be Razed as Fire Hazard," *Northwest Arkansas Times*, June 27, 1963.
[34]"Former Times Editor Dies," *Northwest Arkansas Times*, May 28, 1971, p. A1.

Restoring the Woolsey Farmstead of 1830s Washington County

By Antoinette Fiduccia Johnson and Aaron Ruby

Watercolor rendering of the Samuel Woolsey farm of the mid-1800s by Vladislav Yeliseyev. Courtesy of Revival Architecture, Inc.

Editors' Note: The Woolsey Wet Prairie sanctuary covers more than 40 acres of restored rare prairie wetlands in west Fayetteville in an area farmed by some of the first white settlers in the region, the Samuel Woolsey family. For the last 20 years, Fayetteville has been reconverting the site to its natural state of the early 1800s with native plants and wildlife, and it now attracts nature lovers, bird watchers, scientists, and groups of school children.

The city initially bought the land on N. Broyles Road as a mitigation site to offset the loss of tall-grass prairie when a new wastewater treatment plant was built. Now part of the 40-plus acre sanctuary is being developed as a park around the Woolsey farm. The third phase of this project is the reconstruction of the Woolsey family home and other farm buildings. This article tells the story of the Woolsey family and the restoration of their farmhouse.

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Before the construction of Old Main, the founding of the University of Arkansas, Dickson Street, the downtown square, and even before Arkansas gained statehood, Samuel Woolsey and his family were among the first settlers of European descent to put down roots in what is known today as west Fayetteville. Beginning in the late 1830s, according to tax records, Woolsey began to amass acreage and in 1842, he began construction on the house which his family, at the time living in Hempstead County, could move into.[1] Remarkably, the original white oak, hand-hewn, mortise and tenon house frame remains today, and after over six years of committed leadership from Fayetteville Mayor Lioneld Jordan and the City Council and careful planning and guidance from the Woolsey Farmstead Visioning Committee, the Woolsey house is now undergoing an extensive restoration and reconstruction.

A photo of the Woolsey house likely taken after a major remodel in the late 19th century. The woman may be a daughter of Samuel and Matilda Woolsey. Courtesy of the Woolsey Farmstead Visioning Committee.

Removing layers of past additions and modifications from the late 19th century to the late 20th century, what remains from the house's period of significance[2] will be restored. This includes its exterior wall frame, attic floor joists and decking, and approximately half of the interior wall paneling, as well as the set of stairs and a door leading to the attic. Missing entirely are components that will be re-constructed to fit the period and common to English construction methods in the region. These include the roof and roof framing, exterior wall siding and trim, windows, doors, and porches. Chimneys will be reconstructed using stone remaining on-site. While the interior and the exterior will be completed to allow visitors to gain a glimpse into the simple lifestyle inside a "two-pen" vernacular home, the house itself is an artifact, and a portion of the well-built, nearly 180-year-old-frame will be exposed to view.

Adding to the richness of the education opportunities for today's generations and those to come, the house itself sits on approximately 27 acres. Despite enormous residential development and growth in infra-

structure in the surrounding area, the large plat offers an experience that allows visitors to gain an appreciation for life on the remote frontier. Besides the restoration of the house itself, the grounds also contain the Woolsey family cemetery, final resting place for Samuel, Matilda, and at least five of their children. A well, smokehouse, and the remnants of what is believed to be a curing house for sweet potatoes, will also be restored. Later phases of the project will include the completion of the farmstead, to include a barn, privy, chicken coop, fencing, and other basic outbuildings typical on a mid-19th century farmstead. Planning for the project has been coordinated with various City departments, allowing the site to tie into future trails.

(Above) Framing techniques, hand hewn marks, lap joint with peg visible, centered over post.
(Below) The original foundation beneath wood sills. All of the sills were rotten or severely damaged by termites. The house will have new floor framing and a stone foundation. Both photos by Aaron Ruby.

The Woolsey family history in Washington County began with their arrival near the Farmington community, around 1830.[3] Land records show Samuel purchased 120 acres in Washington County from the federal government in 1838 and then 120 more in 1839, amassing a total of 240 acres.[4] A topographic map from 1888 shows this area with two branches from the middle fork of the White River cutting across his property. Samuel had purchased some of the best farm land in the area.[5]

Samuel and his wife, Matilda (Thompson), along with 10 (of their eventual 13) children relocated from Hempstead to Washington County after his mother's death. In Hempstead, they lived alongside Samuel's parents John and Mary.[6]

Samuel's father, John Woolsey IV (1763-1842), was born in New York.[7] Records could not be located that explained his travel to Greene County, Tennessee, but here he married Mary Gilbert (1766-1828).[8]

John's family can be traced back to 13th century England, where the Woolsey name holds a singular place in history, though any family connection is unknown. In the 15th century, Cardinal Woolsey was said to be the power behind the throne of Henry VIII for nearly 20 years. He was also a candidate for the Papacy when Pope Leo died. The first Woolsey was born in America in 1661 in Long Island, New York, and was also named John.[9] He was likely Samuel's father's great or great, great, grandfather.

John was an Indian scout, a hunter, and a trapper, and was battle-hardened. He participated in two wars, the Revolutionary War and the War of 1812.[10] John was also instrumental in promoting the white settlement of American Indian lands. While living in Hempstead County in 1821, he signed a letter from the Arkansas Territory to the federal government requesting a treaty be enforced with the Choctaw.[11]

John bought land in Greene County, Tennessee, in 1783 and married Mary (Gilbert) in 1787.[12] Here in 1791, their son Samuel was born.[13] Both father and son held strong ties to this community. Later in life, when they enlisted in the War of 1812, they signed up with the 42nd Infantry, a militia out of west Tennessee, although they were living in Illinois at the time.[14]

At least one account states Samuel spent his childhood on a farm in Kentucky.[15] Other documents claim that while there he fought the Creek Indians.[16] Further information on the family's time in Kentucky could not be located.

Research does not reveal why or how the Woolseys got to Illinois from Tennessee, but the family appears in the 1810 census records in Randolph County, Illinois, only one year after the Territory of Illinois was formed.[17] This record also states two more of John and Mary's children were still living with them at the time.

Samuel married Matilda Thompson (1794-1871) of Kentucky while in Randolph County in 1810.[18] Matilda had two of their 13 children in Johnson County, Illinois, William (1811-1894) and Sarah (1813-1885).[19]

Samuel stayed close to his parents during much of his young adult life.[20] While living together in Randolph County, Samuel and John enlisted and served in Wynne's West Tennessee Militia in the War of 1812.[21] Although not otherwise confirmed, at least one source claims that while in service together, they fought in the Battle of New Orleans.[22]

In 1814, after their service in the War of 1812, the families moved to what was then known as Howard County, now named Hempstead County, Arkansas.[23] The U.S. government issued officers a bounty land warrant for 160 acres of government land in one of three districts in Arkansas, Illinois, or Missouri in return for their service in the War of 1812.[24] Because the Woolsey family moved directly to Arkansas after the war and Samu-

(Left) Project consultant Peter Post of Richmond, VA, shown in doorway of what remains of the sweet potato curing house.
(Above) Presumed late 19th century headstone marking the gravesites of Samuel and Matilda Woolsey, located on the property.
Both photos by Aaron Ruby.

el purchased exactly 160 acres from the federal government, it is highly probable the Howard County land was patented to Samuel. However, the U.S. War Bounty Land Warrants records from 1789-1858 do not list either of the men as having acquired property in this way. Interestingly, John did not purchase land in Arkansas although documents state he was one of the first settlers in the area.[25] One is left to conclude that he and Mary lived with Samuel and Matilda.

While in Hempstead County, Matilda had more children: Josiah Patterson (1815-1859), Madison (1817-?), Jane (1819-1848), Gilbert C. (1821-1851), Laurena (1824-1919) (also found to be spelled Lourana and Lurany), Louisa (1827-1919), and Henry (1830-1909).[26] Then, James (1823-1898), Greene Smith (1832-1845), Wesley Fletcher (1836-c. 1863), Martha Elizabeth (1838-1914), and Elizabeth (1840-?) were all born after the family arrived in Washington County.[27]

At the time of the Woolseys' settlement, Washington was the most populous county in Arkansas. It had recently been opened to settlers and after the expulsion of the Native Americans, became one of the most desirable areas in the new frontier.[28] Interestingly, the majority of the new arrivals came from Tennessee.[29]

Traveling to and settling in Washington County would not have been an easy task for Samuel and Matilda and their 10 children. However, they would have been prepared. Samuel had settled land with his father two other times and they now had the assistance of three teenage boys.[30]

Once the Woolsey party arrived in Washington County, they would have searched for the most prized and unoccupied land available. It is

likely the family squatted on this land, claiming it for their own, before an official purchase could be made. It was not unusual for settlers to live on land they did not own, being the first to claim choice lots and deterring other settlers from staking a claim. In 1814 the U.S. Congress passed the pre-emption regulation known as the "squatter land law." According to this law, the squatter had the first right to purchase the land he had settled when it was offered for sale.[31]

Samuel claimed prized prairie land divided by streams forking off the White River.[32] This land would not only have been extremely fertile but would have provided good hunting and have offered natural barriers for livestock.

Because the Woolseys were in Washington County about 12 years before the still existing home was built, it is probable that they built a temporary shelter until the purchase of their land became official. Archeological evidence may answer this question.

The Woolsey home was built in 1842-43.[33] It was tall, of white oak, and on a two-P or double pen (room) plan with a loft area above. The home was built as a one-room deep, two-room house with a shed or lean-to on the back.[34] The home is considered a one-and-one-half-story house because of its tall loft.[35]

Although dendrochronology explains that the lean-to was built at the same time as the rest of the house, it would have been most common to build on a lean-to at a later date.[36] But it is possible that–considering the size of the Woolsey clan–at the time the house was built, they needed this extra sleeping space and included it in the original design. It was not uncommon for a large family to have beds in all the rooms.[37] But, the loft was most likely used as sleeping space for at least some of the children.[38]

In the earliest houses, lofts were reached by a ladder or pegs driven into holes bored in the logs at one end of the room.[39] Because the Woolsey house plan has a staircase leading to the loft, it suggests that it was used often, likely by several children and needed to be sturdier than a ladder.[40] The staircase appears to have been a later addition, as evidence of another stair case, or ladder, in the opposite pen, has been found. Early staircases are often steep, narrow, and tucked out of sight or tightly into a corner, as in the Woolsey home.[41] The Woolsey home also had small sliding windows in both ends of the loft, allowing in natural light.

Matilda and Samuel lived a long time, considering the strenuous lives they led. Matilda lived until 1871. But in her seventies, she finally conceded to the ailments brought on by a fall.[42] Samuel died at the age of 67. But they knew heart-sickness and felt the reality of losing children. Their son, Gilbert, was laid to rest in his thirties and they buried Greene at the

tender age of 13. Jane died in Farmington in 1848 and another son, Josiah, would pass within the year.[43]

In Samuel's will, he left everything to Matilda with the requirement that upon her death, his property pass to his two unmarried daughters, Laurana and Louisa.[44] Records show that Laurana had actually been married to Robert Woodruff in 1840 but granted a divorce in 1845 where all rights were restored to her as a single woman.[45]

Samuel died in 1858 and was buried in a family cemetery on the farmstead. A monument is erected to the Woolseys who are buried here and include Samuel and Matilda's names along with Laurana, Jane, Louisa, Gilbert, and Greene. There are also other unmarked stones placed in the cemetery.

The farmstead was sold in 1919 to the Lester and Vella Broyles family.[46] Multiple generations of the Broyles lived here as well until they sold the farmstead and its land to the city of Fayetteville around 1999.[47] Hence, the name of the road on which the Woolsey farmstead can be found today, Broyles Road

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Endnotes

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[21]"U.S. Government War of 1812 Service Record for Samuel Woolsey," accessed August 21, 2015, on www.fold3.com. "William T. Woolsey," p. 1045.
[22]"William T. Woolsey," p. 1045.
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[25]"William T. Woolsey," 1045.
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[27]Although Goodspeed's *History of Benton, Washington, Carroll, Madison, Crawford, Franklin, and Sebastian Counties, Arkansas,* (1889) states the Woolseys were in Hempstead County before 1830, census records state James was born in Washington County in 1823. After his birth, the next child was born back in Hempstead County. "Woolsey Family Group Sheet," accessed August 17, 2015, at www.ancestry.com.
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[35]Ibid, p. 94.
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[40]Ruby Architects, A-1.
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Mount Comfort: Marked by Education, Religion, and War

By Nancy Hartney

Mount Comfort church as it appears today. Photo by Nancy Hartney.

Old Lovely County, a place with "prairie grass growing as tall as the head of a man on horseback" and grazing for buffalo.[1] A camping site on the bitter trail marked with tears. A populace that nurtured education and religion. A blue-grey pawn during an un-Civil War. A spoke on an Arkansas economic wheel. A place called Mount Comfort.

In 1828, Solomon Tuttle, his sons, slaves, and William D. Cunningham, Tuttle's son-in-law, settled on land that stretched along the upland valley and included Clear Creek and Mount Comfort Branch, now known as Hamestring Creek. Other immigrants joined them, the settlement grew, and took the name of Mount Comfort after the church at its core.[2]

Jane Tuttle Cunningham, wife of William D. Cunningham and Solomon Tuttle's daughter, named the church after the place of worship she and her family had left in Tennessee.

Native Americans, Early Settlers. With the 1803 Louisiana Purchase by the United States, lands opened to additional white settlement, and the U.S. government signaled limited interest in maintaining partnerships with Native Peoples. In the Arkansas territory, hostilities between the Osage, Cherokee, and white settlers consequently grew. By 1816,

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Major William Lovely purchased a land tract as buffer between Osage and Cherokee.[3]

The Lovely purchase, originally comprised of Washington, Benton, and parts of Madison and Carroll counties, eventually became Washington and Benton counties. A slow shuffle of the Osage to Three Forks (OK) and the Cherokee into Arkansas Territory began. Conflict between the tribes continued until yet another treaty was signed, this time at Fort Smith, August 1822.[4]

An influx of white settlers building homes continued until by 1835, the county was dotted with farms, hamlets, mills, blacksmith shops, and stores along the streams and around the valleys.[5] A forcible move west of native tribes subsequently continued in waves until the end of the 1830s.

The Cherokee Nation contested the government's efforts through the courts, but eventually capitulated under the 1835 Treaty of New Echota.[6] Most Cherokee did not sign the treaty nor agree to the land exchange.

Three detachments of Cherokee passed through parts of present-day Washington County. The first detachment from the Cherokee Agency near Charleston, Tennessee, was led by B. B. Cannon. They traveled the North Route, entering Arkansas along the military road at Pea Ridge. On December 25, 1837, they halted near the William Cunningham Farm, camped, and later departed for the Territory, arriving there December 30. Ill and elderly Cherokee who died on the trek, were buried along the trail.

A second group of Cherokees led by John Benge left Alabama, journeyed into Missouri, and entered Arkansas on the old Southwest Trail. The Benge party, 60 wagons and 600 horses, stopped in Fayetteville, and camped near present day Martin Luther King Boulevard (Fayetteville High School) and Stadium Drive.

Other groups used the northern route through present-day Pea Ridge National Military Park, Sugar Creek, and Fitzgerald Station near Springdale. Another contingent of Cherokees led by Richard Taylor, stayed near the home of William Cunningham on March 21, 1839. They subsequently departed through Cincinnati and present-day Farmington on their way to Woodall in the Cherokee Nation West.[7]

A 31-year-old teacher, Sophia Sawyer, traveled from Tennessee to Oklahoma with her Cherokee charges, although many of her colleagues had withdrawn from their missionary duties.[8]

Despite the bitterness of the trek, the Cherokee endured. In the end, "lively commerce between the Cherokee Nation and Fayetteville grew up as a result of their proximity." As the Mount Comfort community grew, Cherokee families sent their children into Washington County for education.[9]

Presbyterian Church, Far West Seminary, Ozark Institute. When the Tuttle-Cunningham family made the trek from Tennessee to Arkansas, Eliza Tuttle, Solomon's 's eight-year-old daughter, rode her pony beside the wagon, reins looped across the saddle horn, knitting as she rode.[10]

Local farmers around Fayetteville before the Civil War were considered prosperous. Their livestock and crops supported area markets and added resources to the larger market system. Tuttle, Cunningham, and kinfolk were part of that prosperity.

Other settler families that contributed to the area and apparently enjoyed affluence, included Isaac Murphy, Hezekiah Appleby, John Albert Henbest, and W.A. and James McCurdy.

During pre-Civil War years, it was generally thought that churches and schools provided civic cohesiveness, social opportunities, spiritual growth, and thus a better life for residents.

The Arkansas Archeology Week Mount Comfort Dig brochure illustrates that sense of community: "Christmas, an exciting time, meant . . . popping popcorn and stringing it, making paper decorations, learning songs and speeches. The tree was always huge, filling the front of the church. Easter and Christmas" were the biggest events of the year.[11]

William Donnell Cunningham (July 7, 1797-February 15, 1876), original settler with Solomon Tuttle, of Mount Comfort. Cunningham was married to Mary Tuttle, Solomon's daughter. Photo taken likely in mid-1800s. Courtesy of Shiloh Museum of Ozark History/Washington County Historical Society Collection S-90- 21N31:4

The first church, built around 1833, was probably constructed of logs. Two preachers, Hezekiah Appleby and Nathan B. Hanks, named in the Works Progress Administration records, served prior to John Buchhamon, the first settled clergyman.

Mount Comfort and Cane Hill, Cumberland Presbyterian communities 15 miles apart, were tied through family, clergy, and educational endeavors. By 1840 population growth around Mount Comfort led to a new church built of the same brick as found in the Cunningham home.

The second structure, built using African American slave labor, was on land owned by W.D. Cunningham. During the Civil War, this second church was burned, and the bricks eventually hauled to Fayetteville and used for building fortifications.

Archibald Yell, Matthew Leeper, Judge David Walker, and others heavily invested in land in the vicinity, and, along with Samuel Newton of Cane Hill and other leaders, took part in early discussions regarding various educational endeavors in Mount Comfort. These men eventually supported the establishment of the Far West Seminary.

Rev. Cephas Washburn, founder of the Dwight Presbyterian Mission (Russellville), came to Washington County, taught at the Fayetteville Fe-

male Seminary, but by 1840 moved to Mount Comfort. There he obtained an 1844 school charter and began fund-raising.

Washburn named the school Far West Seminary–a tip of the hat to its frontier location. Democratic political opposition arose when the Arkansas legislature almost prevented the school from receiving its charter. The *Arkansas Gazette* editor wrote bluntly: On principle, Democrats never encourage institutions of learning.[12]

Construction of the Far West Seminary began east of the brick church on Tuttle property; masonry work was provided by William Cunningham. However, the building was destroyed by fire prior to opening and the group, unable to rebuilt and support their endeavor, sold the property at auction.

Witness to the original conveyance and a Seminary board member, Rev. Robert Mecklin, a Methodist, left Fayetteville for Mount Comfort, where he purchased land from the failed Far West Seminary. Rev. Robert Graham had partnered with Mecklin but departed in the late 1940s to establish Arkansas College in Fayetteville. Cephas Washburn vanished from the Mount Comfort scene, leaving Mecklin to complete the building. He changed the name to Ozark Institute.[13]

Around this same time, Sophia Sawyer,[14] with Cherokee members John Ridge and Elias Boudinot, John's cousin, focused their efforts on Cherokee education. These two men and John's father Major Ridge–signers of the New Echota Treaty–were caught up in the schism among the Cherokee and assassinated June 29, 1839.[15] Sophia Sawyer and Sarah Bird Northup Ridge, John's wife, subsequently moved into Fayetteville.

Once in Fayetteville, Sawyer established the Fayetteville Female Seminary, modeled after Mount Holyoke School (MA). Native American and other student enrollment grew, the campus expanded, and boarding accommodations developed. Well-known educators Robert Mecklin and Cephas Washburn taught at the school prior to moving to Mount Comfort.

Educational Endeavors Proliferate. The Mount Comfort community leaders, keenly interested in education, supported Rev. Robert Mecklin's purchase of assets from the failed Far West Seminary. Faculty for the Ozark Institute included Louisa Ann Mecklin, A.S. Locket, Peter Van Hoose, Cephas Washburn, Isaac Murphy, David McMannus, and Robert Graham.

Families from Northwest Arkansas and the Indian Territory sent their sons to Mount Comfort to study. Four years later, 60 students were enrolled. Notable students included "John Rollin Ridge, the first Native American known to have published a novel, James. H. Van Hoose, mayor of Fayetteville; Edward Payson Washburn, painter of the *Arkansas Traveler*; and John Lynch Adair, editor of the *Cherokee Advocate*."[16]

In the meantime, conflicts flared at the Fayetteville Female Seminary between founder Sophia Sawyer and teacher Ann James. James left Fay-

Mount Comfort School class of 1903. By 1949 the state legislature required smaller schools be folded into larger districts. Owl Creek School (Fayetteville Public Schools) now serves the Mount Comfort environs. Courtesy Shiloh Museum of Ozark History/Washington County Historical Society Collection (P-2151).

etteville for Mount Comfort to develop a school for girls, Mount Comfort Female Academy, often called Miss James'. The actual construction of the Academy probably occurred late 1847 or early 1848.

Ann James later married Methodist minister Lewis S. Marshall. The couple moved to Pine Bluff (AR) for his circuit assignment, and the school subsequently closed sometime in 1849.

The long-standing support of higher education first voiced at Mount Comfort Cumberland Presbyterian Church, together with the Ozark Institute, the Fayetteville Female Seminary, and local educational endeavors, led, in part, to the 1871 founding of the University of Arkansas.[17]

The Conundrum of Slavery. Slavery in the Upper South became an important political, social, and economic concern despite the lack of cotton production. The yeoman farmers of the northwest region provided most of their own labor and, with limited resources, owned few or no slaves.

Church and community leaders in Mount Comfort, Cane Hill, and other Ozark communities supported states' rights and were pro-slavery prior to the Civil War. Cumberland Presbyterian Church leaders, like many white southern Christians, thought slavery theologically sound and morally just. Whether these ideas were preached from the Mount Comfort pulpit is unknown. During the 1840s and 1850s, anti-abolitionist, pro-slavery doctrines were promoted in newspapers and sermons throughout the Upland South; Mount Comfort was likely no exception to that doctrine and way of thinking.[18]

Civil War: Carnage, Destruction, Change. Northwest Arkansas, unlike the Delta region, had little to gain from slavery or the plantation system. Local inhabitants, generally divided in their allegiance, cared little about secession, abolitionists, or slave ownership. Despite this, they supported states' rights, some owned slaves, and many eventually sided with the Confederacy. Residents with relations and ties to the North, continued sympathetic to the North. Most people, particularly members of the Mount Comfort Cumberland Presbyterian Church, supported

the Confederate States. Fayetteville citizens favored and fought for both sides. Cane Hill locals were largely Confederate. West Fork people were pro-Union and mustered most frequently into Federal units. Troop movements and skirmishes during the war uniquely touched each community.

Proximity to Missouri and Indian Territory with its grain and livestock resources, combined to make the entire northwest region a critical war pawn. Mount Comfort, close to major north-south roads, fell to repeated fighting and frequent turnovers between the factions.[19]

The region remained under Confederate control until February 1862 when the Rebel cavalry, under General Benjamin McCulloch, set Fayetteville ablaze and retreated as Union troops advanced. In March, Union troops marched to Pea Ridge and the Battle of Elkhorn Tavern. The battle, a technical victory for the Union, resulted in no clear control by either army over the region.

Southern forces used Mount Comfort and Prairie Grove for staging, encampment, and recruiting prior to the 1862 Battle of Prairie Grove. Again, the Union was victorious, but unable to establish jurisdiction over countryside or towns.

The Confederacy settled into harassing Union troops stationed in Fayetteville and their supply wagons running between Fort Smith (AR), Fort Gibson (OK), and Springfield (MO). Federal soldiers struggled to maintain their garrison and protect the region against guerrilla warfare, but Mount Comfort, scant miles from Fayetteville, suffered frequent raids and skirmishes beyond Federal control. An April 1863 attack by Confederates, the Battle of Fayetteville, resulted in no meaningful change in the status quo.

Sometime during this period, the Mount Comfort Church was destroyed. Later oral accounts and records indicate that brick, a premium material, and wood apparently salvaged from the church, were taken to Fayetteville for Federal fortifications circa 1863.

Robert Mecklin, in his dotage at 68, wrote a series of letters to his daughter, Mary Elizabeth, between 1863 and 1864. At that time, the household consisted of Robert and his wife Luisa Ann Anderson, their widowed daughter Mary and her three children, and their younger daughter Lou. There were three Black servants on the farm–Wesley, Net, and Rindy or Merinda. The Mecklin ménage resided on the Ozark Institute campus near a household of Union sympathizers; neither suffered any destruction during the war.[20]

These letters detail life around the Mount Comfort locality as a mix of violence, civil strife, and occupation by the Union and Confederate armies. Most heinous was plunder by marauders–who respected neither side.[21]

Mecklin's letters describe meager family gardens, crops seized by one group or another, lack of food, especially coffee, and the confiscation of horses, mules, and oxen until nothing remained. Only molasses and to-

bacco were generally available. Blacks, whether slave or freedman, were taken by troops as prisoners or as war contraband. Fires, deliberately set, were left to burn. Disease, a constant theme, worried noncombatant and soldier alike. Contradictory accounts of skirmishes, battles, and plunder by deserters from both armies, exacerbated local trauma.

Indiscriminate killing was a constant horror. Mecklin recounts a November incident (1863). Bushwhackers stopped, asked after a neighbor woman's husband, and then accused her of lying. Grabbing her ten-year old son, they threatened to shoot him. She begged for mercy. "As fate would have it, a man, Frank Woody, passed up the road causing the bushwhackers to say, 'Yonder is a man; he will do.' They shot him dead and rode off to Rhea's Mill."[22]

Mecklin's September 15, 1863, letter: Louisa, his wife, returning from her sister's, realized Union troops were approaching. Despite having ridden her pony both ways, she quickly re-saddled, mounted, and rode away keeping the house between her and the Federal cavalry to prevent them from confiscating the animal. With the help of Rindy (Black servant), Louisa rode through the orchard, laid down a rail fence, replaced it, and later, exhausted, wound her way home through tall weeds.

On another day, Mecklin speaks of the "shrill notes of this bugle struck up, accompanied by the band playing some merry making gigamoros of a Yankee song in exaltation at again having possession, not of Fayetteville, but of its ashes and ground on which it stood." He speculated it was the business of each to destroy any scant stores to keep the other from using them.[23]

Most girls during these early years quilted. The Cunningham girls, who made fine quilts, felt it ". . . a heart break to see these quilts stolen by soldiers who would stack them in front of their saddles until they could scarcely see over them."[24]

Mecklin describes with bitterness four Federals asking for food. Mrs. Mecklin explained the family had little, but she could give them milk and bread. "They conducted themselves decently, ate their (no *our*) milk, bread, butter and syrup . . . and left."[25]

In a September 1863 letter, Mecklin states he had taken "the oath of allegiance to the Confederate States" and would not swear fidelity to the Union, lamenting, "When will this unholy war end?"

During the war years, Eliza Tuttle Noland, widowed daughter of Solomon and Mary Tuttle, lived near the Mecklin farm with her daughter Martha Alice. She farmed with the "help of a slave called Uncle Sam and a woman named Harriet." They farmed until their animals were confiscated, then turned to cultivating vegetables by hand with a hoe.

In one of his last letters, February 1864, Mecklin wrote of riding to Elm Springs Mill with sacks of wheat. While there, a Federal took one sack. Afraid he would lose all his grain, Mecklin left the mill, wheat unground, railing against Rebels and Federals.

Oral history suggests that Mount Comfort structures were used as a hospital, although a specific building is not indicated. Mecklin's Ozark Institute, a mile east of the church, was perhaps used as a Confederate hospital. The church may have been used as a Union hospital. Letters from soldiers, oral histories, and the journal of Major John Henry Brown, publisher of the Confederate *The War Bulletin*, provide further comments on the use of Mount Comfort structures as hospital.

"Vacant public buildings were often used as quarters and hospitals for soldiers, so it is not surprising that the church would be used in this manner. An exact date for any Mount Comfort hospital cannot be verified, but it appears to have been operational by January 1862."[26]

One winter day, possibly during this same period, a snowball fight among the Confederate soldiers broke out in the cemetery. Good natured fun among soldiers–some not yet past boyhood.[27] A snowball fight among soldiers in Fayetteville is also noted in *The War Bulleti*n.

Twelve students of the Ozark Institute are known to have lost their lives in the Civil War: William Brown, Henry Fullbright (sic), and one of the Hawkins boys killed at Oak Hills or Wilson's Creek (MO); James Skelton and a Pelfry killed at Pea Ridge (AR); William Kifer and William L. Skelton died at Corinth (MS); James Pollard and B.F. Boone killed at Prairie Grove (AR); Thomas Jefferson died at Fayetteville (AR); Wythe Walker at Jenkins Ferry (AR); and, H. McConnell died in a skirmish on Boston Mountain (AR).[28]

A 2014 Arkansas Civil War Sesquicentennial plaque honors four residents as the first Confederate dead, killed at the Battle of Wilson's Creek (MO): Capt. S. R. Bell, Sgt. W. Brown, Pvt. Henry Fulbright, and Pvt. Sam McCurdy.

Four soldiers are buried in the cemetery: Joseph Mount, 117th Indiana Infantry; G. O. Fisk, 57th Indiana Infantry; Edward Huls, 6th Kansas Cavalry; Lt. Philip McGuire, 1st Arkansas Cavalry.[29]

By 1864 people in Northwest Arkansas were starving. Fields lay fallow, mills burned, and stores ransacked. A last intentional wartime use for Mount Comfort was the Union Post Colony established December 1864 for local farmers to defend against marauders. Col. LaRue Harrison developed the system.[30] The Mount Comfort colony, under Capt. Shreve, had 35 men and good land with which to help feed and protect the group. In exchange, colony members had to swear allegiance to the Union.[31]

Population Changes from Farm to City. After the Civil War, Mount Comfort did not recover, but slowly declined as people moved into Fayetteville, Benton County, and other states. Improved roads and better opportunities stimulated these moves, and later, the advent of cars accelerated the population shift.

Three poor farms were established in Washington County, one at Mount Comfort. The 80-acre Elia Muncie farm purchased around January 1852, had two log buildings erected. Federal social security and state

The Home of William D. and Mary Tuttle Cunningham built by Cunningham in 1840. The original pillars were huge pine trees hauled by ox wagon from Bentonville. The residence was still occupied as of 1987. Courtesy Shiloh Museum of Ozark History/ Mildred Lavender Collection (S-90-21N51:6).

welfare programs eventually replaced this system and the Muncie farm sold.[32]

The present-day church, rebuilt in 1874 as a solid frame structure, continues to offer worship services while the old school house serves as a meeting resource.

As population increased in Northwest Arkansas, small rural districts merged with nearby schools. In 1927, the state passed legislation requiring districts with fewer than 15 pupils to dissolve and/or combine. By 1949, again through legislation, smaller schools were folded into larger districts, Mount Comfort among them. Between 1950 and 2011, new schools were constructed: Holt Middle School, serving the Mount Comfort area, and Owl Creek School in 2006, offering elementary and middle grades.[33]

By 1961, all that remained of the Ozark Institute, originally a two-story, four-room, brick building, were foundation stones and an inscribed marker dated 1845-1871. The house the Mecklin family used during the Civil War still stands in present day Razorback Park, converted to the University of Arkansas golf course club house.

The Cunningham House survived until recently when it was torn down for a subdivision. As of 2010 no other use of the property was noted. However, it is possible the creek mentioned by B.B. Cannon (resettlement guide), is the original Clabber Creek just northeast of the Mount Comfort Church, now subdivisions Clabber Creek I and Clabber Creek II.

Other land previously owned by the settlers includes part of the present-day University Farm, Fayetteville's Holcombe School, and around the Gary Hampton softball complex.[34]

In July 2020, the Fayetteville City Council approved a request for a planned zoning district which would include the Razorback Park. The 130-acre site, owned by the Craig Underwood family, may be developed into a nature preserve, softball complex, and use as apartments, offices,

and businesses.[35]

The founding patriarchs built their community in widening concentric circles, until today, when their names are now scattered across the county on streets, buildings, and statues. Newspaper articles and government census testify to contributions of their offspring.

The Mount Comfort Cemetery holds Solomon Tuttle, his bones resting where he began in Arkansas. Many of his descendants sleep nearby; others live and thrive across Arkansas.

The 1830 cemetery, still in use, offers a simple resting place with its moss-covered stones and slumbering denizens. As of this 2020 writing, burial lots are still available.[36]

Endnotes

[1]Julia Sevarine Reed, *Solomon Tuttle of Old Mount Comfort and his Descendants* (Fayetteville, AR: Washington County Historical Society, 1961), p. 83.

[2]Jerry E. Hilliard, *An Antebellum Ozark Community and the Civil War: The Archeology of the Second Mount Comfort Church* (3WA880) Washington County, AR (1840-ca.1865), (Fayetteville, AR: *Arkansas Archeological Survey Research Series No. 63*, 2008), p. 5.

[3]C. J. Miller, "Lovely County," *Encyclopedia of Arkansas*, (Central Arkansas Library System, Little Rock, AR, 2019), last modified May 25, 2008, https://encyclopediaofarkansas.net/entries/lovely-county-2940/.

[4]George Sabo III, "Osage," *Encyclopedia of Arkansas* (Central Arkansas Library System, Little Rock, AR, 2019), last modified February 11, 2019, https://encyclopediaofarkansas.net/entries/osage-551/.

[5]Hilliard, *Arkansas Archeological Survey Research Series No. 63*, p. 3-4.

[6]Georgia Historical Society, Today in Georgia History, "The Treaty of New Echota," accessed April 6, 2020, https://www.todayingeorgiahistory.org/content/treaty-new-echota. Note: The legal basis for the forcible removal of the Cherokee Nation from Georgia, negotiated by a Cherokee leader, Major Ridge, and a few others, without authorization from Cherokee Chief John Ross.

[7]Charles Y. Alison, *A Brief History of Fayetteville, Arkansas* (Charleston, SC: The History Press, 2017) p. 25-27. Note: The northern route crossed Tennessee, Kentucky, southern Illinois, and southern Missouri into western Arkansas at Pea Ridge.

[8]Ibid., p. 29-30.

[9]Ibid., p. 27.

[10]Reed, *Solomon Tuttle of Old Mount Comfort and his Descendants*, p. 33. Note: Eliza Mariah Tuttle married Isaac Taylor Nolen. She died in 1883; buried beside her husband in Mount Comfort Cemetery.

[11]*Arkansas Archeology Week Mount Comfort Dig* (April 1991) *Open House April 6,* [pamphlet] n.p., Arkansas: Author. Note: Vertical Files, Fayetteville Public Library, Arkansas.

[12]Alison, *A Brief History of Fayetteville, Arkansas*, pp. 33-34.

[13]Reed, *Solomon Tuttle of Old Mount Comfort and his Descendants*, p. 44.

[14]Cassandra McCraw, "Sophia Sawyer (1792-1854)," *Encyclopedia of Arkansas*, (Central Arkansas Library System, Little Rock, AR, 2019), last modified May 11, 2017, https://encyclopediaofarkansas.net/entries/sophia-sawyer-1757/.

[15]Tim A. Garrison, "Cherokee Removal," *New Georgia Encyclopedia*, July 23, 2018, accessed April 21, 2020, https://www.georgiaencyclopedia.org/articles/history-archaeology/cherokee-removal.

[16]Alison, *A Brief History of Fayetteville, Arkansas*, p. 34.

[17]Hilliard, *Arkansas Archeological Survey Research Series No. 63*, pp. 6-8. Note: Teacher Ann James born London, moved to New York, entered Woman's Missionary Society, taught Fayetteville Female Seminary, established Mount Comfort Female Academy, married Methodist Rev. Lewis S. Marshall, MCF Academy defunct circa 1849.
[18]Ibid. pp. 4-5.
[19]Ibid, p. 9.
[20]Reed, *Solomon Tuttle of Old Mount Comfort and His Descendants*, p. 56.
[21]Robert W. Mecklin, *The Mecklin Letters Written in 1863-64 at Mount Comfort*. (Fayetteville, AR: Bulletin Series Number 10 Washington County Historical Society, W. J. Lemke, editor, 1955) p. 6. Most Mecklin references are noted in text.
[22]Ibid, p. 61.
[23]Ibid, p. 16
[24]Reed, *Solomon Tuttle of Old Mount Comfort and His Descendants*, p. 81.
[25]Mecklin, *The Mecklin Letters Written in 1863-64 at Mount Comfort*, p.17.
[26]Hilliard, *Arkansas Archeological Survey Research Series No. 63*, p. 10. The Arkansas CW Sesquicentennial Committee plaque, erected in 2014 in MC cemetery, documents the community had hospitals for Union and Confederate troops but does not indicate the exact buildings.
[27]Oral history with U.S. Army Reserve Master Sgt. Benjamin Henbest, great grandson of John Albert Henbest, Mount Comfort, March 3, 2020. *The War Bulletin*, January 28, writes circa 1862, "Confederate troops from Louisiana and Texas quartered at Fayetteville have a first taste of snow when more than a foot falls in Fayetteville. At the 'first Battle of Fayetteville, a snowball fight among comrades-in-arms, broke out between the Butterfield House and the Square, with 25, 30 and sometimes 50 of the assailants heaving, pitching, pawing, scraping, and kicking more snow.'"
[28]Reed, *Solomon Tuttle of Old Mount Comfort and His Descendants*, p.39.
[29]Walter Lemke, ed., *Flashback*, "Mount Comfort," Vol. 3 No. 1 (February 1953), pp. 31-35 (Washington County Historical Society, pub.).
[30]Hillard, *Arkansas Archeological Survey Research Series No. 63*, p. 12.
[31]Misty Gittings, "Union Colonies: Civil War Settlements Provide Food, Safety," *Northwest Arkansas Democrat Gazette*, dated March 4, 2012, https://www.nwaonline.com/news/2012/mar/04/union-colonies-civil-war-settlements-provided-food/.
[32]Washington County Archives, "Brief History of County Buildings," accessed July 8, 2020, https://www.co.washington.ar.us/government/departments-a-e/archives/brief-history-of-county-buildings; also, dated June 6, 2014, Arkansas Genealogy.com/Washington/poor_farm.htm.
[33]Alison, *A Brief History of Fayetteville, Arkansas*, pp. 95-97.
[34]Washington County Historical Society, "Preserving Our Past for Future Generations: Mount Comfort," dated January 18, 2017, http://www.washcohistoricalsociety.org/mount-comfort/.
[35]Stacy Ryburn, "Former Golf Course Eyed for Park," *Northwest Arkansas Democrat Gazette*, Section B Northwest Arkansas p. 1, April 6, 2020. Todd Gill, "Fayetteville City Council recap: July 21, 2020," *Fayetteville Flyer*, July 21, 2020, https://www.fayettevilleflyer.com/2020/07/21/fayetteville-city-council-recap-july-21-2020/
[36]Oral history with U.S. Army Reserve Master Sgt. Benjamin Henbest, March 3, 2020.

**Author's note: Early settlers as listed on the Mount Comfort entry plaque: Cunningham–Trammel–Moore–Pitman–Cannon–May–Wilkinson–Hinds–Ross–Rowe–Brown–Wootten–Ferguson–Paton–Smith–Wilson–Nielson–Hawk–Cravens–Bell–Lavender–Meyers–Deaver–Spencer–Patterson–Marcum–Pyeatte–Chambers–Henbest

In May Flashback *invited readers to submit stories about their pandemic experiences and thoughts. Amy Allen responded with this anecdote.*

Life in These Virus Times: "Archiving COVID-19"

By Amy Allen

I laughed when I heard the first news report about the toilet paper shortage. I didn't rush to the store but instead waited for my regular weekend grocery run. I started to grasp the seriousness of the situation as I pulled into the grocery store parking lot early in the morning. Normally, it would have been mostly deserted, but this was no normal morning. The cold rain didn't help the ominous mood as I ran in from the end of the lot. Once inside, I was stunned as I walked up and down aisle after aisle of empty shelves. The workers frantically tried to restock. The customers moved subdued through the store with their rounded over carts. The boom of the thunder outside seemed to rattle the building, magnifying the intensity of the situation.

I didn't know that experience would only be the first chapter in what has been the strangest time of my life. I've never seen anything like this in my life, and I hope never to again. There is no doubt that life as we know it is changing before our eyes. What will historians study when they look back at 2020?

For other historical events, a researcher might go to an archives to read a personal journal, letters written between family and friends, or even newspaper clippings about the event. Paper newspapers are being replaced by digital versions, and journals and correspondence are being replaced by text messages and social media posts. We now live in a world of bits and bytes, which are easily corrupted and easily deleted. Most historians have read pieces of paper older than themselves, which might not have been touched by human hands for decades. Digital materials

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Amy Allen is the University Archivist in the Special Collections Division of the UofA Libraries. She is part of a team collecting written accounts, visual materials, and oral histories documenting life during COVID-19.

on the other hand degrade at an exponentially faster rate and require consistent monitoring and updates. Untouched digital files often become unreadable. Paper materials have to be guarded against threats such as insects, water, fire, or natural disasters. Digital materials have to be guarded against all these things plus software or hardware obsolescence or bit rot.

As a professional archivist, my work life was already changing. I have to change the way I collect and the types of materials I collect. In the past donors have come to archives with their grandfather's letters or a box of old photographs. What will donors of the future bring? Will any of it be readable?

My colleagues and I in Special Collections at the University of Arkansas Libraries have chosen to take a proactive approach to collecting materials during the recent pandemic for several reasons. By collecting as the pandemic is unfolding, we can preserve the thoughts, actions, and reactions with all the detail of the present moment not filtered through hindsight. As the historical record for this event will be primarily in digital form, it is essential to start preservation early to attempt to guard against digital loss.

We have three main projects at the Libraries related to the pandemic. As the University Archivist, it is my job to preserve materials related to the history of the University of Arkansas. In addition to collecting UofA websites and official communication, I am asking students, faculty, and staff to submit their personal experiences related to the pandemic. These experiences could take any number of forms, including but not limited to photographs, social media posts, journals, videos, or essays. Katrina Windon, Collections Management and Processing Unit Head, is managing a project to archive websites which complement our existing manuscript collection topics. Virginia Siegel, Folk Arts Coordinator for Arkansas Folk and Traditional Arts is collecting oral histories from Arkansans around the state. While oral histories might not be new, methods for collecting these oral histories have had to be altered in this time of social distancing.

We are all having to adapt and change the way we do everyday activities during this time. As an archivist, I encourage others to tell their own stories. I imagine people will be studying this time period from every angle possible long after all of us are gone. What do you want future historians to know about this time? It's our job now to preserve these bits of history whether working with a professional archive or preserving items yourself. More information about the specific projects in Special Collections documenting the pandemic can be found at: https://uark.libguides.com/DocumentingCOVID-19.

Hilltop: Joy Pratt Markham's Summer Camp for Boys and Girls

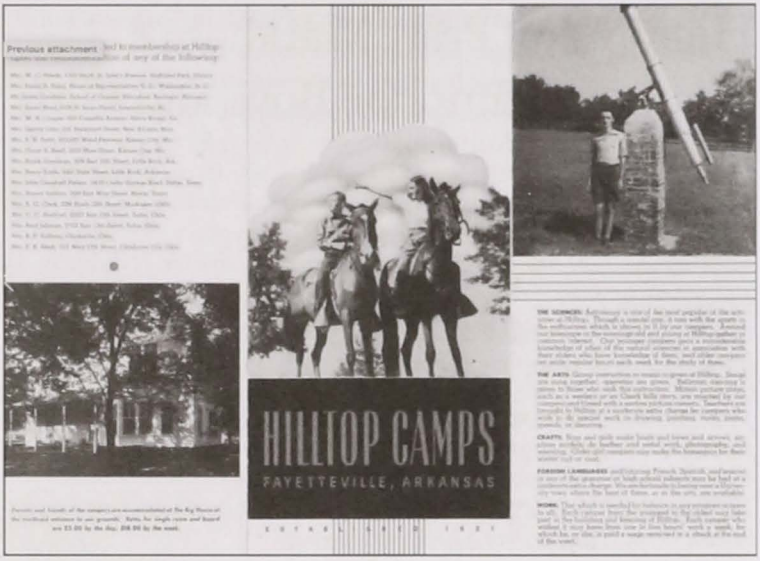
By Joy Pratt Markham

Ed. note: From 1921 to 1945 Joy Pratt Markham (1894-1976) operated Hilltop Camps, a summer camp for boys and girls on her family's Markham Hill property. Hilltop offered a variety of typical summer camp activities such as horseback riding and swimming in the camp pool and attracted children both from Fayetteville and across the country. In 1938 Markham wrote a lengthy description of the camp, its facilities, and operation. The first half is printed here; part two will follow in a future Flashback *issue. Markham's original typed copy is filed in Mullins Library on the UofA campus; the digital formatting was provided by Lisa Orton. The Joy Pratt Markham Gallery at the Walton Arts Center is named for Markham, who studied art at the Chicago Art Institute. This piece, presented as written by Markham, tells the story of the camp that served hundreds of children.*

Photograph of Joy Pratt Markham taken likely in the 1920s or 1930s. Courtesy of Julian Pratt Waterman Archer.

Hilltop Camps occupy one hundred and fifty acres[1] on a mountain top one mile west of the State University town of Fayetteville, Arkansas. The University grounds over-lay the limits of the town on the west, reaching down into the valley which separates Fayetteville from Hilltop, coming within a short distance of the east boundaries of Hilltop, which in their turn reach down into the valley from their side. Our mountain top is one thousand, six hundred feet above sea level. No road passes us. We are secluded by being lifted above all surrounding places but are within five or ten minutes by automobile of highways, railroad station, and the excellent physicians and hospital which the city of Fayetteville affords.

Lisa Orton was born and raised in Fayetteville, where she returned after 30 years as a software developer in Maryland. She is a co-founder of Friends of Markham Hill which seeks to preserve the natural and historic character of the hill.



One of the various brochures describing Hilltop Camps designed by Joy Pratt Markham. Courtesy Lisa Orton.

On the mountain top are sunny meadows, wooded places, and springs of cool water. The skies above Hilltop are spacious. The white clouds are close to us by day, and the stars at night. Foliage opens to reveal vistas of blue hills and shining valleys. Eras ago our mountain top was a sandy seashore. It is like that still, with its smoothness and its wideness transposed to the dry, mountain air. Being inland, and not experiencing the extremes of heat and cold of a more northern region, we have few summer fogs. Those that come rarely reach us at our mountain height. Flowers bloom on the mountain top all summer through. Soft breezes blow over us. At night we look down upon the lights of Fayetteville.

The boys' and the girls' camps are on opposite sides of the mountain top, the boys' on the west, and the girls', on the east. Both are in open meadows on highest parts of the mountain. The boys' camp field slopes gently down to the swimming pool, where glimpses of their tents are reflected.

A woods separates the pool from the girls' campgrounds. The girls live in houses, six girls in little curtained off rooms and one leader to a cabin. The cabins, or "shacks", are little more than a roof and a floor, with sides built up a few feet and curtains to lower against rain. There is scarcely less air and sunshine in these than in the boys' tents, which perhaps the girls would not be quite so capable of managing.

The girls' camp is in full view of the sunrise, as it comes up over the eastern hills, the boys', of the sunset, spreading its glory across the west-

ern sky. Both look out over the valleys to the mountains of the south. The girls' camp field is curtained from the remainder of the campgrounds by a grove of small trees which conceal the houses from view.

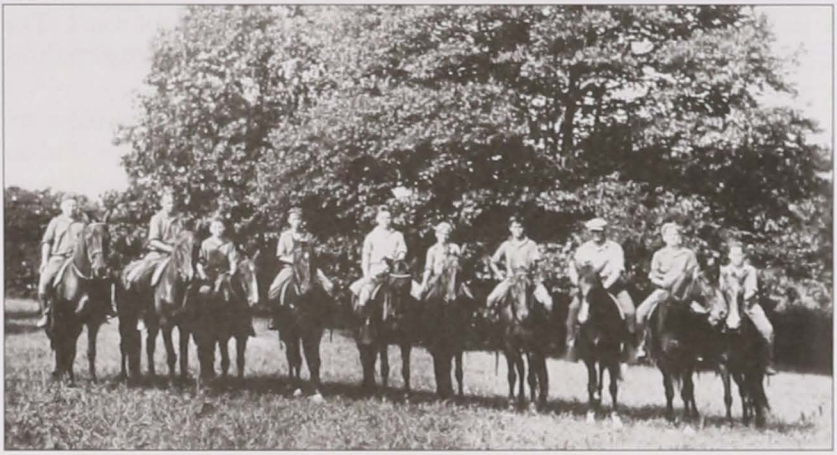
Just beyond this curtain of trees is our "Play House", where plays are staged, handcrafts are done, music and dancing lessons are given, and on weekend evenings we gather for programs and parties. The boys share this building with the girls, but they have also, nearer their grounds, a large open shed, with tool house, for their manual work, together with a darkroom for photography. Girls may come here with the boys to make their bows and arrows, bird houses, or other things of wood, and to develop and print their Kodak pictures.

The stables are by the path of the girls as they come from their camp field to their meals, and beyond them, across the "breeze-blown" meadow, past the blue vervain and orange butterfly weed, is our dining room. This is in a grove of trees on the north boundary of our grounds, which we call Wren Grove, by a spring. The spring is one of three near the borders of our mountain top. The boys and girls come together at the dining hall for their meals.

Our fourth spring lies centrally on the mountain top. This is "the pasture spring". In the center of what was once the large sunny pasture which was a part of Mrs. Markham's home as a child, and what is now our camp play fields, this spot, with its swimming pool, is perhaps the center of our picture at Hilltop. (The stables, with their beautiful horses, have a strong appeal). The water in the pool is soft as rainwater. Flowers bloom here which are not found on other parts of the campgrounds. Below the pool the little stream has cut its way down, exposing large rocks, making little pools with sandy beaches where little boys may play, building their dams and harbors and sailing their boats (and where little girls may do much the same, and make their play houses). Fossils are found here, rare birds are seen, and a chipmunk or rabbit or squirrel may become less timid during the summer months. The swimming pool is built of concrete and is one hundred feet long by thirty feet wide, with an average depth of five feet. There is a diving board at the deeper end. Campers row their kayaks here before they (the older ones) take them out on their camping trips to the nearby rivers and streams. The kayaks are built by the older boys and their leaders in the shop at camp.

In the widest open place on our play fields stands the brick column for our telescope. In the evenings to many of our campers there is no other spot more interesting than this. The telescope has an eight-inch lens.

There is a smaller swimming pool for the smaller campers, those five or six and under. This is in The Hollow, a place of depth and shade, near The Big House, our guest house for parents and friends of the campers. Near the Big House also are houses for the younger campers, with their



Nine boys and a man seated on horses at Hilltop Camp (now known as Pratt Place), Fayetteville, about 1930. Courtesy of the Shiloh Museum of Ozark History, Washington County Historical Society Collection (P-280).

own little play house, shower bath and toilet, outdoor fireplace, and playgrounds. We occasionally have several of these little ones, and wish that we might have more, for they live the very essence of the camp life.

On opposite sides of the large swimming pool are showers for the girls and boys. These, with only curtains about them, are open to the sun and air. There are additional showers for the girls and their leaders on the girls' campgrounds. The kitchen staff have their separate shower room.

The toilets on the campgrounds are of the governmentally approved type, with concrete floor and septic tank beneath, with, in addition, one of the chemical type.

The Big House, near the east entrance to the grounds, is a large frame house with large rooms and high ceilings. In the electric ovens of the large kitchen of the Big House the many loaves of home-made bread for the camp tables are baked. Electricity is used also for refrigeration here, while at the camp kitchen a three-hundred-pound ice box and wood and coal range are used. Drinking water is served un-iced at both the camp and the Big House tables, frosting the glass as it comes fresh from the well from which it is drawn. Guests at the Big House may have room and board by the day, week, or month. Accommodations are limited to four large bedrooms with one conveniently large bath, in which there is always an abundance of hot and cold water. Water for the bathroom is electrically heated. There are electric lights and a telephone at the Big House. Electric lights (unless the flashlights belonging to the campers may be called so) are not used on the campgrounds. Girl campers wishing hot baths come to the Big House bathroom for them. The large back porch at the Big House serves as our camp craft room, where supplies for trips are packed. The

attic of the Big House provides storage space for city clothes.

All of the water on the hilltop is pure for drinking. The water in each spring and well is tested before camp begins each summer. There are three shallow (dug) wells, and two deep (drilled) wells on the campgrounds in addition to the four springs. The two deep wells are by the large pool and supply water for the showers there. One well is by the stables to furnish water for the horses, and another is by the Play House, for showers and for the kitchen which is for the girls' use there. The well near the Big House is the one from which we draw the drinking water for our meals and which supplies the Big House water system. The spring at the camp dining room supplies water for the kitchen and for the cooks' showers there.

The Pratt-Markham family home, referred to as the "Big House," served also as camp headquarters as well as a guest house for visitors, and a bakery for homemade bread baked daily. Photo taken likely in the 1970s. Photo courtesy of Kenneth Smith.

Water in the swimming pool is chlorinated according to specifications (the amount of chlorine used is slight, since our volume of water is large in proportion to the number of campers) and is tested for purity each week. A complete soap bath is required of each bather before entering the pool, and a leader stands by to inspect or assist with the bath of each younger camper. The water in the large pool, flowing in and out continually, replaces itself on an average of between four and ten days, according to the wetness or dryness of our season.

At the boys' tent field, in addition to the tents in which the boys sleep, there are three frame buildings, in one of which there is a ping pong table and place for indoor archery and horse shoe throw; in another there are the mats for wrestling and boxing; and in the third the boys keep their collected books and may go for quiet reading. A leader is in charge here

on rainy days and during the free period after the noon meal each day. The boys keep their nature collections and their finished work from the craft or work shops here.

Each boy who wishes it may have a tent bedroom of his own. The boys are encouraged to take the individual tents, for in camp where their social needs are so beautifully met, there is the need also to be alone. The tents are spaced at friendly but uncrowded intervals. There are many clear nights when cots are pulled out in front of the tents and their owners sleep on them under the stars. Because of the almost complete absence of fog and the freedom from mosquitoes or any troublesome insects, outdoor sleeping is at its best at Hilltop. Boys may group together at times with a leader for outdoor sleeping, to study the stars and constellations and hear stories about them before going to sleep. The same is true at the girls' camp. No screens are needed on the sleeping quarters.

In the two camps, boys and girls from seven to ten, eleven to thirteen, and fourteen to sixteen are grouped together. If a younger boy is timid about taking a tent by himself, he is placed in a larger tent with a leader. A leader's tent is always nearby. For the younger boys and girls there is a leader for every three or four campers, and the older campers, a leader for every six. Campers over sixteen, acting as apprentice leaders, live in close association with their leaders, observing their work, receiving their instruction, and helping them in the ways in which they are able.

The camp program is adapted to the needs of the various ages and temperaments of the boy and girl campers. Younger campers (those eight and younger) are required to take their naps in the afternoons, sleeping an hour or more after the noon meal. All campers, with their leaders, take a rest before the noon meal. All are required to lie flat on their cots with a sheet pulled up over them for the first twenty minutes of this period, and during this time may not read or talk. The majority soon form the habit of dropping off into a sound sleep. In camp, where the habit of giving one's best in every endeavor is formed, the ability to relax quickly and completely is also soon acquired. The more vigorous campers are the ones who fall most readily into this program. The midday rest period follows the general swim and an active morning. Before the evening meal there is a shorter rest period during which campers are not required to lie down. Our campers come to their meals refreshed and with better appetites, although they eat more quietly and slowly, than we believe they would do if they came direct from play. If a swim with its accompanying showers before and after has not preceded, to step through the showers is the last thing to be done before coming to the noon or evening meal.

After the noon meal there is a free period of seventy-five minutes during which campers sleep, read, write, mend, or play under the trees (or perhaps in a tree house), each in their own camp fields. After the evening

meal both camps remain together, first, for a time of visiting, and then for such activities as tennis, archery, group games, and afterwards, campfires, parties, or for star study around the telescope.

Campers are weighed every morning. At first thought this may sound foolish, but it is a way of establishing to the satisfaction of the camper as well as the director that more rest is needed. Camp life is usually considerably more vigorous than the life lived by the boy or girl at home, and it is necessary that it not be entered upon, with the unbounded enthusiasm that the camper brings with him (or her), too abruptly. It is generally the rule that a camper will lose in weight during the first two weeks of camp. The scales will tell us if weight is being lost too rapidly. If this happens, the camper is given more rest than is ordinary, and the condition is corrected before signs of irritability have chance to appear. This, together with the fact that our program is not based competitively, we believe is largely responsible for the constancy of the concord and good feeling that has existed among our campers throughout the seasons. Season after season we have had no hard feelings or fights among the boys. People have asked us how we discipline our boys, but boys, as well as girls, placed where conditions are right, require no imposed discipline. Or so it has been through the summers. The work, play, and outdoor living make their demands and rules which the boy or girl must obey in order to go on with this kind of living. If unpleasantness ever occurs, and added rest is given, it is given not as a punishment, but in response to a need. Camp is a place where inner control and lasting friendships are won.

Endnote

[1]The camp was initially established on about 40 acres, but expanded over the years. By 1938, it was 150 acres.

The second part of Joy Pratt Markham's description of Hilltop Camps will be published in a future Flashback *issue. In it, Markham writes more about campers' schedule and daily life as well as accommodations and rates.*

"My Dear, Dear Sister," Letters from Harriet Wall, 1878

By Russell P. Baker

Ed. note: This article first appeared in the summer issue of Arkansas Family History, *journal of the Arkansas Genealogical Society, which permits this reprint.*

It is our pleasure to share with our readers the following previously unpublished letters from Harriett Wall of Boonsboro, Washington County, Arkansas, to her sister, Josephine Cumby, who at the time lived in DeSoto Parish, Louisiana. They are taken from a larger collection of family letters made available to the Arkansas Genealogical Society by Dr. Denise L. Baskind, dcbaskind@yahoo.com. Others from this collection will be published from time to time. The following letters have been edited for clarity.

Such letters as these are a valuable source of both family and women's history. They give us a rare insight into the loneliness and isolation felt by women such as these who, having left their old homes, found themselves living among strangers in a remote place with few close neighbors or resources. One can feel the need of these women for family and friends, while they live lives filled with hard, grueling labor.

Harriett, the daughter of John and Rosalie Palter Sandin, was born about 1843, probably in Hardin County, Tennessee. By 1850, the family was living in the northeastern corner of Mississippi in Tishomingo County.[1] Her father, a native of Virginia, was a tailor and a farmer. Harriett married a native of Tennessee, Thomas N. Wall, shortly after the Civil War. He was a veteran of the Confederate Army and a miller and a millwright by profession. The family was living in Gibson County, Tennessee, in 1870.[2] About 1876 or so, the family moved to northwest Arkansas and settled in Vineyard Township in the southwestern part of Washington County. It appears that Harriett died here shortly after 1880. In 1893 Mr.

Russell P. Baker is editor of the Arkansas Family History, *publication of the Arkansas Genealogical Society.*

Wall married Polly Philips at Dutch Mill Arkansas.[3] He died September 17, 1915, in Washington County. Harriett and Thomas seem to have been the parents of several children, John B., b. 1867, Thomas Jr., b. 1869. Leolind, b. 1871, Queen, b. 1873, Bacon, b. 1874, and Samuel, b. 1877.[4] From other letters in the collection it appears that Harriett's marriage was not a happy one.

Harriett's sister, Josephine Sandin Cumby, the recipient of these letters, was born September 1, 1838, in Hardin County, Tennessee. She married Major B. Cumby November 6, 1857, in Alcorn County, Mississippi.[5] By 1860, the family was living in Mine Creek Township in Hempstead County, Arkansas.[6] Mr. Cumby served in the Confederate Army during the Civil War and was killed near Atlanta, Georgia, in 1864.[7] Soon afterwards Josephine and her children moved to DeSoto Parish, Louisiana. In September of 1881 she married Thomas J. Garrett. Josephine died August 3, 1934, in DeSoto Parish.[8] She was the mother of some three children, Alice, b. 1855, John M., b. 1863, and Neddie, b. 1867.[9]

Letters from Harriet Wall

Boonsboro Ark Aug 19 1878
Dear sister

My concience (sic) will not suffer me to neglect you any longer and I am sorry that after so long a time I have nothing to write that will interest you, but still harder times than ever [are here]. It seem (sic) as though the fountain of Justice is dried up though we should not complain as long as we have good health and plenty to eat and that we have, thank God. Times cannot be as hard in your country as it is here. I never hear you complain. I want to come and see it, may be that you have learned submission that is what I should have learned long ago.

We are growing worse and worse dissatisfied [here] every day. Is there no balm in Gilead, is there no physician there. This is the lonesomest (sic) place we ever chanced to get into. Will we ever get away. I think we will make an effort this fall. We have plenty of good neighbors and they all want to sell out and go, so when a (farmer?) comes in [here] and finds so many good places for sale that it disheartens him so that he had rather go farther and do worse. But there is a little hope for us. Yet we will know pretty soon and if we do happen to sell, I will let you know what course we will take. [Sister] Georgia [Reid][10] is dying for us to come back to Tennessee. But what is the use. They never stay in one place long at a time. They are here today and gone tomorrow like gypsies.

Mr. Wall[11] thinks of going off somewhere to get work, provided he does not sell [our farm] but I had rather he would sell (?) than for him to be gone so long. I do hope we will sell out and come to you, for I sym-

pathise (sic) with you in your loneliness and would be happy to meet with you once more on the (shore?) of time. Surely there will be a change for the better now and then. We will forget our troubles and remember our misery no more. So, let us be of good cheer and never look back but forward. there is nothing like faith. Dear sister I was very sorry that we could not attend your camp meeting. who knows but we will be able to be at your next [year].

O dear sister when you read this if you can read it at all, sit right down and answer it and don't put it off so long for I want to hear from you often, though I have a poor way of showing it. You must consider my chance (?) but I acknowledge that I could write oftener than I do and intend to do so from this hence and I think of you more than you would immagine (sic).

I get a letter from [my sisters] Mandy [Amanda Standin Scrape][12] and Georgia [Standin Reid] one every four or five months. We all complain to one another but to no purpose. We still go on in the same old way making promises all the while but never fulfilling them. I wish we all lived close together, then there would be no kneed (sic) of writing. For I am a poor hand to write letters and beg you to excuse my miserable scribbling. this time for my wrist is slightly sprained and my hand is very unsteady. Well I hope there will be a change before I write again, as papa [her father] used to say there is no one knows the luck of a lousy calf to live all the winter and die in the spring.

Harriet Wall

Mr. Wall wishes to know if times are still growing worse or better in that section financially and otherwise. Tell us about everything as near as you can that we may know whether to come there or not for we don't want to get into a worse place than this"

Boonsbro Ark Oct 20 [18]78

My Dear Dear sister [Josephine Cumby]

Once again, I seat myself to address you, not knowing what the contents of my letter will be. I have been waiting for the expected change [in my life] but no change has come yet.

I know it is all for the best. My husband, [Thomas Wall] is building a mill at Dutchtown [Dutchmills] [in] a partnership of three parties. My husband owns one third [of it.] It is thought that the mill will be worth four or five thousand dollars when it finished. Mr. Wall offered his land at one third its value but could not find [a] sale for it, so he resolved to raise the price to its old standard and keep it till [the price] land come in market again,

And now dear sister I know a little of what you know a great deal [of].[13] I [feel like half a] widow, for Mr. Wall is twelve miles away from

home all the while except Saturday nights and Sunday. Each week is an age to me for I have taken the home responsibilities on my own shoulders, and there is the corn to gather, the wheat to sow, the potatoes to dig, hogs to fatten and kill, besides my house work and the little [one] to care for,[14] but that is nothing compared to widowhood indeed and I simpathize (sic) with the more but the widows borders shall be established says one who never lies, how much I crave to live near you to cheer and comfort you in your lonely hours.

Dear sister did you not say that perhaps I belonged to that class of people who would not be satisfied in Paradise. How completely you failed to guess my disposition, for if I can only reach the remotest corner [of heaven] where I can hear dear Mother's voice singing in the heavenly choir, I will be satisfied. What a change her death has wrought in me for I know that I must follow in her footsteps if I would meet her there. She passed over a thorny road, she trampled obsticles (sic) and even impossibilities and made the path smooth as glass for my unaccustomed feet. I will press on, for I know that I cannot overtake her until I cross the river and then I trust I shall see her in her beautiful dazzling robes. If I am hid away in some dark corner where I can peep out and feast my eyes upon her beauties. I will be satisfied.

Well dear sister we are having a very late frost for this climate. We have not had a killing frost yet. [My daughter] Queen and I gathered two large boquets (sic) this morning from our front yard. Queen is like her Grandmother, she idolized flowers and I take great pains to cultivate them for her sake. You would have been amused to have seen how she cherished the two pressed roses that your little Nettie sent us. She kept and admired them for a long time. Sister Amanda is very anxious about you, she fears you have died of yellow fever. I hope the scourge will not come near you. It has already swept thousands of souls into Eternity. It is called a war of God against Man.

Oct 27, sister I commenced to write this letter last Sunday, but company came in and I had to lay it bye and could not find time last week to finish it. I have so much work on hand now, all our winter clothing to make up and stockings to knit. I tacked a comfort[er] last week for the first time in my life and I think it is beautiful.[15] I am going to make two more right away. I have one quilt nearly ready to quilt and goods to make another very nice one which I want to quilt this winter, but not till after Christmas. I have not made a quilt for better than four years.

I hope you are doing very well now. I was very sorry to hear that you had so much sickness in your little family. You had better come to the mountains and breathe the pure atmosphere and drink the purest water that ever flowed and eat the best fruit in the world.

Sister my fingers are stiff with cold. It is almost freezing cold out of

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doors. What a change in the weather since last Sunday. We are getting along very well with our outdoor work. Two of our boys are large enough to do good work and I hare [hired] a man to help them when we have hawling (sic) to do, as our mules are fiery and unsafe for children to handle.

We have sowed fifteen acres in wheat and have ten more nearly ready to sow. We have gathered our corn and dug our potatoes but mind you we have not done all this since I commenced this letter. We sowed the wheat the week before. Well now sister I will close after stating that we are all in the very best of health, hearty–hale, strong Mountaineers, that we are, who would not wish to live here.[16]

Your affectionate Sister, Harriet Wall"

Endnotes

[1]1850 U.S. Census, Division 4, Tishomingo County, Mississippi, p. 21A.
[2]1870 U.S. Census, Division 5, Gibson County, Tennessee, p. 283B.
[3]https://search.ancestry.com/cgi-bin/sse.dll?indiv=1&bid=2548&h=953683&tid=&pid=&usePUB=true&_phsrc= CBi2285&_phstart=success. Source. The 1910 U.S. Census, Dutch Mill Township, Washington County, Arkansas, p. 27A indicates that he had been married three times.
[4]1880 U.S. Census, Vineyard Township, Washington County, Arkansas, p. 65A.
[5]https://search.ancestry.com/cgi-bin/sse.dll?indiv=1&bid=7842&h=140981&tid=&pid=&usePUB=true &_phsrc=CBi2281&_phstart=success. Source.
[6]1860 U.S. Census, Mine Creek Township, Hempstead County, Arkansas, p. 895A.
[7]www.sos.la.gov/HistoricalResources/ResearchHistoricalRecords/LocateHistoricalRecords/Pages/ConfederatePensionDatabase.aspx.
[8]https://search.ancestry.com/cgi-bin/sse.dll?indiv=1&dbid=60525&h=44194103&tid=&pid=&usePUB=true&_phsrc=CBi2105&_phstart=successSource
[9]1860 U.S. Census, Hempstead County, Arkansas, op. cit. and 1880 U.S. Census, 7th Ward, DeSoto Parish, Louisiana, p. 257B. She has not yet been located on the 1870 census.
[10]1880 U.S. Census, 9th Civil Dist., Obion County, Tennessee, p. 159B.
[11]At this time, it was customary for women to refer to their husbands as "Mr." even to close family members.
[12]1880 U.S. Census, Hickory Ridge Township, Prairie County, Arkansas, p. 182B.
[13]Her sister is widowed at this time.
[14]Probably, her youngest child, Samuel, born in 1877.
[15]To tack a quilt or comforter is to use a short length of heavy thread pulled through the quilt and tied in a knot, usually with a length of cord left showing.
[16]For a detailed description of the Dutch Mills area see the Fayetteville, Arkansas, *Arkansas Sentinel*, November 23,1881.

Washington County Historical Society Writing Awards

12th Annual Competition for Articles on the History of Washington County

The Washington County Historical Society announces the 12th annual manuscript competition for the Walter J. Lemke Prize and the Lessie Stringfellow Read Prize with a call for submissions.

Topics can address any aspect of Washington County history, including archeology, lives of individuals, or records of institutions, and can be set in any time period. Both professional and amateur historians are invited to submit articles.

A $250 prize is offered in each of two categories. Winners will be recognized at the society's annual meeting in October:

- The Walter J. Lemke Prize for best article on Washington County history, with preference given to subjects outside Fayetteville.
- The Lessie Stringfellow Read Prize, with preference given to the best article about Fayetteville.

Manuscripts will be judged on contribution to knowledge about the county's history, originality of the subject, and use of primary and secondary sources. Manuscripts must be original material, and not previously published. They must be typed, preferably include endnotes, and run from 2,000 to 4,000 words, excluding endnotes. The title page should be headed: "WCHS Prize," followed by the manuscript's full title, and the author's name, mailing address, telephone number, and email.

Entries become the property of the Washington County Historical Society and will not be returned. All submissions will be considered for publication in *Flashback*. WCHS reserves the right to award one or no prizes.

All submissions for both prizes will be deposited in the Special Collections Department of the University of Arkansas Libraries. Submissions should be emailed or mailed by **June 30, 2021**. *Email to* Patsy G. Watkins at pwatkins@uark.edu. *Mail to* Lemke Prize, Washington County Historical Society, 118 E. Dickson Street, Fayetteville, AR 72701.

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